

NSC BRIEFING

14 June 1955

BACKGROUND--SINGAPORE LABOR STRIFE

- I. "Sympathy" strikes in Singapore, accompanied by some violence, got underway 13 June (exactly one month after serious Communist-directed riots in May).
- A. Strikes thus far involve 15-30,000 manual and transportation workers, although strike leaders had hopes for (and continue to claim) a general work-stoppage.
- B. Immediate trigger was arrest (12 June) of six suspected Communists, five of whom were union leaders.
- C. Actually, strike had been in making for some time, as one-day demonstration supporting wage negotiations in progress between 1,300 civil service clerks employed in harbor administration and Singapore government.
1. Harbor clerks have been out for 7 weeks, and negotiations are now deadlocked on question of back-dating agreed salary schedule.
2. Harbor union involved is a moderate one, affiliated with moderate Singapore Trades Union Council (TUC).
- D. Leaders of "sympathy" strike now say it will continue until release of six arrested.
1. Communist-directed students, who were "activists" in May riots, quiet to date.

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II. "Sympathy" strikes engineered by far-left People's Action Party (PAP), which active in labor field.

A. Although PAP disavows Communism, it has associated itself with Communist Party in fight against colonialism, accepts support from strong Communist elements in Singapore Chinese student and labor groups.

1. Communist Party, outlawed in 1948, appears to be successfully manipulating PAP.

III. Trade unionism accounts for only 76,000 of Singapore's estimated working force of 250,000 (80% Chinese).

A. Approximately half of 76,000 government-employed: 25,000 in moderate Singapore Trades Union Council, 7,000 in unions controlled by PAP, after this, field is open.

B. PAP has strategic position among public transport, education, and civil aviation workers.

1. PAP may increase its influence among navy base and harbor employees as result "sympathy" strike.

25X6
V. Communist subversion and unrest in Singapore, principally affecting students and trade unionists, expected to increase.

A. Subversion receives chief emphasis in Malayan Communist directives.

B. Communists proved in May they can create trouble whenever they wish.

C. Morale of anti-Communists in Singapore has suffered severely during past month.